

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 PARIS 27427 01 OF 03 201955Z

64

ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 OMB-01

TRSE-00 /060 W

----- 104208

R 201926Z SEP 76

FM AMEMBASSY PARIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5153

INFO AMCONSUL BORDEAUX

AMCONSUL LYON

AMCONSUL MARSEILLE

AMCONSUL NICE

AMCONSUL STRASBOURG

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 PARIS 27427

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: FR, PINT

SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR'S MEETING WITH FORMER PRIME
MINISTER CHABAN-DELMAS, SEPTEMBER 10

SUMMARY: IN CHABAN-DELMAS'S VIEW, THE CHIRAC RESIGNATION IS SIGNIFICANT ONLY IN TERMS OF FRENCH INTERNAL POLITICS. IT HAS NO BEARING ON NATIONAL DEFENSE OR FOREIGN POLICY ISSUES. THE UDR WILL BASICALLY SUPPORT GISCARD'S AND BARRE'S GOVERNMENT AND WILL PROVE, BARRING UNFORESEEN EVENTS, TO BE A KEY PILLAR IN THE PRESIDENTIAL MAJORITY. CHIRAC WILL TAKE HIS PLACE WITHIN PARTY RANKS, AND MINISTER OF JUSTICE OLIVIER GUICHARD IS EXPECTED TO PLAY THE LEADING GOVERNMENTAL ROLE FOR THE UDR. GISCARD WILL HAVE LITTLE OR NO SUCCESS IN ATTRACTING SUPPORT FROM THE LEFT. END SUMMARY.

1. FOLLOWING A LUNCHEON AT CHABAN-DELMAS'S SUMMER HOUSE IN ASCAIN IN THE PAYS BASQUE, I HAD A LENGTHY DISCUSSION WITH HIM ON INTERNAL FRENCH POLITICS AND
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 PARIS 27427 01 OF 03 201955Z

ESPECIALLY THE CAUSES BEHIND THE RECENT CHANGE IN

GOVERNMENT. CHABAN-DELMAS MADE THE FOLLOWING MAJOR POINTS IN RESPONSE TO MY INQUIRIES:

2. THE RESIGNATION OF JACQUES CHIRAC AS PRIME MINISTER AND THE APPOINTMENT OF RAYMOND BARRE IS SIGNIFICANT ONLY IN TERMS OF FRENCH INTERNAL POLITICS AND HAS NO BEARING ON NATIONAL DEFENSE OR FOREIGN POLICY ISSUES.

3. IN CHABAN-DELMAS'S VIEW, CHIRAC SERIOUSLY OVERPLAYED HIS HAND VIS-A-VIS PRESIDENT GISCARD D'ESTAING. IT WAS BASICALLY A QUESTION OF CHIRAC'S OWN POLITICAL AMBITION AND DIFFERENCES OVER POLICY AND TACTICS. CHIRAC IS NOT AN IDEOLOGICAL MAN; HE IS BASICALLY A TACTICIAN AND A VERY CLEVER ONE. CHIRAC WAS CONVINCED THAT THE BEST POLITICAL TACTIC AT THIS STAGE WAS TO CALL FOR EARLY LEGISLATIVE ELECTIONS IN AN EFFORT TO TAKE THE LEFT BY SURPRISE AND GAIN MORE SEATS FOR THE MAJORITY. IN ORDER TO ACHIEVE THIS, HE WANTED MORE POWERS AS PRIME MINISTER TO EXECUTE POLICY ACROSS THE BOARD, AND HE COMPLAINED TO THE PRESIDENT ABOUT MINISTERS AND HIGH GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS GOING DIRECTLY TO THE ELYSEE BEHIND HIS BACK. IN ALL OF CHIRAC'S MANOEUVRES, PIERRE JUILLET, HIS ADVISER, PLAYED A CRITICAL ROLE IN INFLUENCING CHIRAC'S DECISIONS; IN FACT, ONE CANNOT SEPARATE CHIRAC'S THINKING FROM THAT OF JUILLET'S.

4. AFTER THE GAINS MADE BY THE LEFT IN THE CANTONAL ELECTIONS, CHIRAC BROUGHT INCREASING PRESSURE TO BEAR ON THE PRESIDENT TO CHANGE HIS POLICIES AND TO APPROVE CHIRAC'S SCENARIO FOR CONSOLIDATING THE PRESIDENTIAL MAJORITY AND, BEYOND THAT, ENLARGING IT BY CALLING FOR EARLY LEGISLATIVE ELECTIONS. CHIRAC AND JUILLET STARTED MAKING NOISES TO THE EFFECT THAT THEY COULD ASSURE NOT ONLY THE RE-ELECTION OF 150 UDR DEPUTIES IN PARLIAMENT BUT ALSO THAT THEY COULD PROBABLY ASSURE THE ELECTION OF 30 OR 40 NEW UDR DEPUTIES.

5. JUILLET DRAFTED A NOW INFAMOUS MEMORANDUM TO THE PRESIDENT RECOMMENDING, IN NO UNCERTAIN TERMS, THAT THE

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 PARIS 27427 01 OF 03 201955Z

PRESIDENT ADOPT A MORE AUSTERE MANNER IN HIS PUBLIC PRESENTATIONS AND THAT HE GRANT CHIRAC MORE EXTENSIVE POWERS. GISCARD ADOPTED THESE RECOMMENDATIONS TO A CERTAIN EXTENT AND, IN EFFECT, REJECTED THE ADVICE OF SOME OF HIS CLOSE SUPPORTERS, SUCH AS PONIATOWSKI, WHO WERE ABSOLUTELY SHOCKED BY THE BLUNT MANNER IN WHICH THE PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE WAS TREATING THE PRESIDENCY. PRESIDENT GISCARD'S SOMBER NATIONALLY

TELEVISED ADDRESS IN MARCH 1976 SHOWED A TROUBLED INDIVIDUAL, AND GISCARD'S AUSTERE PRESENTATION AND MANNER RAISED FUNDAMENTAL QUESTIONS ABOUT HIS LEADERSHIP ABILITIES.

6. THEN THERE WAS A CURIOUS QUIRK OF HISTORICAL

CONFIDENTIAL

NNN

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 PARIS 27427 02 OF 03 202007Z

64

ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 OMB-01

TRSE-00 /060 W

----- 104408

R 201926Z SEP 76

FM AMEMBASSY PARIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5154

INFO AMCONSUL BORDEAUX

AMCONSUL LYON

AMCONSUL MARSEILLE

AMCONSUL NICE

AMCONSUL STRASBOURG

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 02 OF 03 PARIS 27427

ACCIDENT. GISCARD TOOK A TRIP TO ALSACE AND WAS GREETED WITH GREAT WARMTH AND ACCLAIM. PSYCHOLOGICALLY THIS WAS THE TYPE OF BOOST THAT GISCARD NEEDED, AND HE REALIZED THAT, INDEED, HE WAS THE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC AND THAT HE HAD A BASE OF NATIONAL SUPPORT. BUT, BEYOND THIS, GISCARD CAME TO THE FUNDAMENTAL REALIZATION THAT THE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC MUST LEAD ON BASIC POLICY ISSUES. THIS WAS, INDEED, THE TURNING POINT IN GISCARD'S TENURE AS PRESIDENT. THERE WAS NO ONE BUT HIMSELF WHO HAD THE RESPONSIBILITY OF TAKING A LONG LOOK AT THE COUNTRY'S PROBLEMS AND

ESTABLISHING THE BROAD BASIC POLICY LINES OF FRANCE.

7. FROM THIS POINT ON, THE PRESIDENT BEGAN TO MOVE TO RESTORE HIS OWN POSITION. DURING THE SUMMER MONTHS GISCARD HAD CHIRAC IN A VERY VULNERABLE POSITION; HE COULD POINT TO CHIRAC'S LACK OF LEADERSHIP IN THE PARLIAMENT OVER THE CAPITAL GAINS TAX ISSUE AND ESPECIALLY HIS LACK OF LEADERSHIP AMONG THE GAULLISTS
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 PARIS 27427 02 OF 03 202007Z

IN SUPPORTING THIS BASIC REFORM OF THE PRESIDENT.
(CHABAN MENTIONED THAT CHIRAC TOLD UDR DEPUTIES THAT ON THE CAPITAL GAINS TAX ISSUE IN PARLIAMENT, THEY COULD DO WHATEVER THEY WANTED. THIS WAS A SCANDALOUS ATTITUDE FOR THE PRIME MINISTER TO ADOPT ON A VERY BASIC POLICY ISSUE, AND THAT VERY DAY GISCARD WAS ON THE CAPITAL GAINS TAX ISSUE IN PARLIAMENT, THEY COULD DO WHATEVER THEY WANTED. THIS WAS A SCANDALOUS ATTITUDE FOR THE PRIME MINISTER TO ADOPT ON A VERY BASIC POLICY ISSUE, AND THAT VERY DAY GISCARD WAS INFORMED OF HIS PRIME MINISTER'S ATTITUDE.) GISCARD ALSO COULD POINT TO GROWING DISSENSIONS WITHIN THE PRESIDENTIAL MAJORITY ON A NUMBER OF ISSUES. THERE WAS ALSO THE DETERIORATING ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL SITUATION. ON THE POLITICAL FRONT, ALL THE PUBLIC OPINION POLLS WERE SHOWING THAT THE PARTIES OF THE UNITED LEFT WERE GAINING IN POPULARITY AND THAT, IF ELECTIONSWEREHELD, THE LEFT WOULD WIN. THIS DEVELOP-
MENENT WAS IN STARK CONTRAST TO WHAT CHIRAC WAS CLAIMING- HE COULD ACHIEVE BY EARLY ELECTIONS. IT WAS AT THIS POINT THAT GISCARD FELT THAT HE COULD CALL HIS PRIME ...- MINISTER IN AND TELL HIM THAT THE SITUATION WAS NOT .
ON THE CAPITAL GAINS TAX ISSUE IN PARLIAMENT, THEY COULD DO WHATEVER THEY WANTED. THIS WAS A SCANDALOUS ATTITUDE FOR THE PRIME MINISTER TO ADOPT ON A VERY BASIC POLICY ISSUE, AND THAT VERY DAY GISCARD WAS INFORMED OF HIS PRIME MINISTER'S ATTITUDE.) GISCARD ALSO COULD POINT TO GROWING DISSENSIONS WITHIN THE PRESIDENTIAL MAJORITY ON A NUMBER OF ISSUES. THERE WASALSO THE DETERIORATING ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL SITUATION. ON THE POLITICAL FRONT, ALL THE PUBLIC OPINION POLLS WERE SHOWING THAT THE PARTIES OF THE UNITED LEFT WERE GAINING IN POPULARITY AND THAT, IF ELECTIONS WERE HELD, THE LEFT WOULD WIN. THIS DEVELOP-
MENT WAS IN STARK CONTRAST TO WHAT CHIRAC WAS CLAIMING- HE COULD ACHIEVE BY EARLY ELECTIONS. IT WAS AT THIS. POINT THAT GISCARD FELT THAT HE COULD CALL HIS PRIME ...- MINISTER IN AND TELL HIM THAT THE SITUATION WAS NOT-.
GOING WELL AT ALL AND THAT IT WAS PERHAPS TIME TO CHANGE THE GOVERNMENT.

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 PARIS 27427 02 OF 03 202007Z

8 CHIRAC'S MAJOR MISCALCULATION IN THIS SCENARIO WAS TWO-FOLD, ACCORDING TO CHABAN. ONE, HE MOVED TOO FORCIBLY AGAINST THE PRESIDENT; AND TWO, HE DID NOT STRIKE AT THE RIGHT TIME. THE RIGHT TIME FOR CHIRAC TO HAVE MOVED WAS RIGHT AFTER THE CANTONAL ELECTIONS WHEN THE PRESIDENT WAS MOST VULNERABLE. HE DID NOT DO THIS AND ALLOWED TOO MUCH TIME TO ELAPSE WITH A CONCOMITANT WORSENING OF THE POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC SITUATION. ALSO, AND EVEN MORE IMPORTANT IN INTERNAL POLITICAL TERMS WITHIN THE UDR ITSELF, CHIRAC ALLOWED CERTAIN OPPORTUNITIES TO PASS WHICH WOULD HAVE ASSURED HIM THE LEADERSHIP OVER THE UDR EVEN IF HE HAD RESIGNED. SPECIFICALLY, CHIRAC ALLOWED THE ELECTION OF YVES GUENA AS THE SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE UDR AND DID NOT PUSH TO THE HILT THE ELECTION OF ONE OF HIS OWN "SYCOPHANTS" SUCH AS AHDRE BORD OR CHALANDON. IF ONE OF THESE TWO MEN HAD BEEN ELECTED TO THE HEAD OF THE UDR, CHIRAC COULD ASK THEM AT ANY TIME TO STEP DOWN AND TO HAVE NEW ELECTIONS IN ORDER FOR CHIRAC TO BE RE-ELECTED AS HEAD OF THE UDR. THIS WOULD THEN PLACE CHIRAC AT THE HEAD OF THE MAJOR PARTY IN THE MAJORITY AND CHIRAC WOULD BE FACING THE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC DIRECTLY AS A PARTY LEADER. INSTEAD, WHAT HAPPENED WAS THAT ELEMENTS WITHIN THE UDR (I.E., THE BARONS SUCH AS CHABAN, DEBRE, GUICHARD, ETC...) WORKED TO HAVE A MAN OF INDEPENDENT STANDING VIS-A-VIS CHIRAC ELECTED TO THE HEAD OF THE PARTY. YVES GUENA IS SUCH A MAN, AND, CHABAN-DELMAS STRESSED, GUENA WILL NOT RESIGN AS SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE UDR AND PLANS TO STAY FOR A FULL TWO-YEAR TERM; THEREFORE, CHIRAC WILL NOT REPLACE HIM AS WOULD BE THE CASE IF ONE OF HIS MEN HAD BEEN ELECTED. CHABAN CONFIDED THAT ONE OF HIS MAJOR STRATEGIES DURING THIS PERIOD WAS TO ASSURE THE ELECTION OF A NON-CHIRAC MAN TO THE HEAD OF THE UDR.

9. I ASKED WHAT WOULD HAPPEN IF CHIRAC TRIED TO TAKE OVER THE LEADERSHIP OF THE UDR NOW. CHABAN-DELMAS REPLIED THAT IT IS WELL KNOWN WITHIN THE RANKS OF THE UDR THAT WHOEVER ENGAGES IN A LEADERSHIP FIGHT NOW WITHIN THE PARTY WILL LOSE BECAUSE THE WORD IS OUT THAT

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 04 PARIS 27427 02 OF 03 202007Z

IT WILL BE A "FIGHT TO THE DEATH." IN OTHER WORDS,
EVEN CHIRAC, WITH ALL HIS AMBITION, HAS TO THINK TWICE
BEFORE ENGAGING IN SUCH A BATTLE BECAUSE IT IS NOT IN

CONFIDENTIAL

NNN

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 PARIS 27427 03 OF 03 202045Z

64
ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 OMB-01

TRSE-00 /060 W
----- 105100

R 201926Z SEP 76
FM AMEMBASSY PARIS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5155
INFO AMCONSUL BORDEAUX
AMCONSUL LYON
AMCONSUL MARSEILLE
AMCONSUL NICE
AMCONSUL STRASBOURG

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 03 OF 03 PARIS 27427

HIS OWN POLITICAL INTEREST THAT THE UDR SPLIT UP.

10. IN EFFECT, CHABAN IMPLIED THE UDR WILL
BASICALLY SUPPORT GISCARD D'ESTAING'S AND BARRE'S
GOVERNMENT AND WILL PROVE, BARRING UNFORESEEN EVENTS,
TO BE A KEY PILLAR IN THE PRESIDENTIAL MAJORITY.
CHABAN ADMITTED THAT CHIRAC IS NOT TO BE DISMISSED AS
AN UNIMPORTANT ELEMENT WITHIN THE MAJORITY BUT THAT
PERHAPS CHIRAC, NOW, HAS BEEN SCALED DOWN TO PROPER
SIZE. HE IS NOW A FORMER PRIME MINISTER AMONG OTHER
FORMER PRIME MINISTERS WHO AUTOMATICALLY ARE ELECTED TO
THE EXECUTIVE BUREAU OF THE UDR WHICH DEPENDS ON THE
NATIONAL COUNCIL OF THE PARTY OF SOME 800 MEMBERS.
CHIRAC WILL TAKE HIS PLACE WITHIN THE PARTY RANKS,

AND OLIVIER GUICHARD IS EXPECTED TO PLAY THE LEADING GOVERNMENTAL ROLE FOR THE UDR.

11. CHABAN-DELMAS CHARACTERIZED CHIRAC AS EXTREMELY CLEVER AND DYNAMIC BUT NOT AN INTELLIGENT MAN. HE CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 PARIS 27427 03 OF 03 202045Z

SAID THAT CHIRAC DOES NOT UNDERSTAND POLICY ISSUES IN THE LARGER SENSE OF THE TERM. HIS AMBITION IS HIS GREATEST DRIVING FORCE. WHAT IS IRONIC, IN CHABAN-DELMAS'S VIEW, OF COURSE, IS THAT CHIRAC, WHO WAS "THE TRAITOR" WITHIN THE UDR RANKS WHO SWITCHED THE PARTY'S SUPPORT FROM ITS CANDIDATE (I.E., CHABAN-DELMAS TO GISCARD D'ESTAING) IN THE 1974 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS, HAS ONCE AGAIN TRIED TO COMMIT TREASON AGAINST THE VERY MAN THAT CHIRAC HAD HAD ELECTED IN 1974. BUT NOW HE HAS DONE HIMSELF IN "AS DO ALL TRAITORS IN HISTORY," CONCLUDED CHABAN. ACCORDING TO CHABAN, GISCARD DISLIKED CHIRAC WHEN THEY BOTH WERE MINISTERS IN CHABAN-DELMAS'S GOVERNMENT. THEY HAVE NEVER BEEN CLOSE IN THE PAST AND NEVER BECAME CLOSE IN RECENT YEARS. HOWEVER, AT ONE POINT, DURING CHIRAC'S PRIME MINISTERSHIP HE HAD AN ALMOST OVERWHELMING INFLUENCE OVER THE PRESIDENT--TO THE EXTENT THAT CHIRAC CLAIMED RECENTLY THAT HE WOULD DUMP PONIATOWSKI IN ANY MINISTERIAL SHUFFLE AND SQUASH THE INDEPENDENT REPUBLIC PARTY'S ROLE AND INFLUENCE OVER THE PRESIDENT.

12. I ASKED CHABAN WHAT THE FEASIBILITY WAS OF THE PRESIDENT ATTRACTING VOTES FROM THE LEFT. CHABAN SAID THAT GISCARD D'ESTAING WILL NOT BE ABLE TOMAKE ANY SIGNIFICANT INROADS ON THE UNION OF THE LEFT WHICH IS AS SOLID AS THE GROUND FOR ELECTORAL PURPOSES UNTIL THE LEGISLATIVE ELECTIONS IN 1978; THEN, BASIC POLICY DIFFERENCES WILL APPEAR WITHIN THERANKSOF THE LEFT, BUT NOT BEFORE. IF THE LEFT DOES COME TO POWER IN '78, GISCARD WANTS TO BE IN A POSITION WHERE HE WOULD BE PORTRAYED AS A MAN OF PROGRESSIVE REFORM; PERHAPS, CHABAN SPECULATED, TO FACILITATE HIS STATUS AS PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC WHEN HE WOULD BE OBLIGED TO APPOINT A SOCIALIST PRIME MINISTER. THIS IS NOT UNIMPORTANT SINCE GISCARD PROBABLY FEELS THE HEAVY RESPONSIBILITY OF MAINTAINING THE INSTITUTIONS OF THE FIFTH REPUBLIC AND NOT CAUSING A CRISIS WHICH COULD DESTROY THOSE INSTITUTIONS AND BRING CHAOS TO FRANCE. IT IS INDEED HIS OBLIGATION TO DO EVERYTHING POSSIBLE TO MAINTAIN THE INTEGRITY OF THE REPUBLIC, CHABAN CONCLUDED. CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 PARIS 27427 03 OF 03 202045Z

RUSH

CONFIDENTIAL

NNN

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: CABINET, DIPLOMATIC DISCUSSIONS, MEETING REPORTS, PERSONNEL RESIGNATIONS, POLITICAL SITUATION
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 20 SEP 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: BoyleJA
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976PARIS27427
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760355-0325
From: PARIS
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19760941/aaaabiyy.tel
Line Count: 390
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 8
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: BoyleJA
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 23 APR 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <23 APR 2004 by CollinP0>; APPROVED <11 AUG 2004 by BoyleJA>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: AMBASSADOR'S MEETING WITH FORMER PRIME MINISTER CHABAN-DELMAS, SEPTEMBER 10 SUMMARY: IN CHABAN-DELMAS'S VIEW, THE CHIRAC RESI
TAGS: PINT, FR, (CHIRAC, JACQUES), (RUSH, KENNETH), (CHABAN-DELMAS)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006